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TROPICAL ECOLOGY | 2018

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR TROPICAL ECOLOGY (GTÖ)



**CHALLENGES IN
TROPICAL ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION -
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES**





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Heike Kuhlmann – KCS Kuhlmann Convention Service

Concept, Layout and Cover

roman.tschirf@gmail.com

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CERTIFICATION OF TROPICAL FORESTS: FROM IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO POLITICAL ECONOMY?

Alain Karsenty¹

¹*CIRAD, Montpellier, FR, alain.karsenty@cirad.fr*



Certification has not reduced deforestation in tropical countries. However, improving the management of productive forests would indirectly contribute to preventing deforestation through sustainable forest-oriented development of a territory. It generates jobs and tax revenues that play their role in public decision-making processes regarding land use. It is difficult for narrowed impact assessments to grasp this process, which is more a matter of political economy. Impact evaluators and public policies scientists must work jointly to get a full picture of the effects of policy instruments.

Various observations suggest that companies investing in certification to gain or maintain market share are self-regulating to avoid losing their certificates, and thus comply with laws and regulations. Can FSC certification guarantee greater sustainability than strict compliance with the law? Several cases suggest that the letter of a regulation may be respected but its spirit betrayed, justifying certification. The rise of legality certifications, nevertheless, poses a challenge to the FSC and should lead to rethinking the concept of sustainability of tropical forest management.

Certified areas are promoted by governments to demonstrate (their) good forest management. Certification has become an institution in the sociological sense of an established social form. If the positive externalities of certification are considered as collective goods, and these labels are increasingly used in public policies, it becomes legitimate to supplement market incentives with subsidies for the adoption of certification. Three measures can be foreseen: (1) prioritisation in public procurement, (2) a reduction in forest royalties for certified companies, offset by international transfers to national budgets, (3) a pooling of the costs of certification audits through an allocation of certain revenues from the Forestry Funds.